

RICHLAND COUNTY JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

Judge Gregory P. Mohr

300-12th Ave., N.W., Ste. 6

Sidney, MT 59270

406-433-2815

RE: HB 557 – Allow political parties to support & oppose judicial candidates

For House State Administration Committee

February 17, 2011

Honorable Chairman and Members of the committee. My name is Gregory P. Mohr. I am the President of the Montana Magistrates Association, the elected Justice of the Peace of Richland County, Montana, and the City Judge of the City of Sidney. The Montana Magistrates Association opposes this Bill for the simple fact that it compromises the INDEPENDENCE of the JUDICIARY. Historically, Judges in the State of Montana have ran and been elected as non-partisan candidates for good reason. If there were political affiliation allowed, the Independence and judgment of the court would always be questioned along party lines. The best example is what is happening in the Capitol on a daily basis. A paper or any news source reports daily how Bills have been pushed through along party lines suggesting that proper discussion and thought were not put into them before their passage and it was sheer party numbers that pushed them through. The Judiciary of Montana has always been non-partisan for that very reason. Independent decisions are made unencumbered by party pressures or the appearance of impropriety by those pressures. Our job is a search for the truth and we must remain independent and neutral at all times. The citizens of Montana deserve an Independent and neutral Judiciary. In many cases the mere appearance of unfairness is more disastrous to the public image of the judiciary than a mistaken interpretation of the law or facts. A party affiliation would clearly advance that interpretation.

The Montana Magistrates Association urges you to vote NO on HB 557 for these reasons. Thank you.

Judge Gregory P. Mohr